

Mayor Otis Johnson and Savannah City Council cut the ribbon for the newly expanded W.W. Law Center during a June 1 ceremony. The \$1.5 million renovation adds needed library, computer and meeting spaces.

An investment in centers for our community



Workers lay sod outside the Lady Bamford Center, a \$1.7 million City renovation on Savannah's west side.

Major renovations to facilities on east and west sides will serve residents young and old.

Two Savannah community centers flanking the City's east and west side have undergone major renovations that will help the facilities serve citizens from the very young to the very old.

In June Savannah City Council celebrated the ribbon cutting of the expanded W.W. Law Center, on the City's eastside.

The \$1.5 million project includes an exterior face lift and 4,200 square feet of additional space, making way for a new library, added meeting space, a computer center, crafts room and improved handicapped accessibility.

"This center provides a safe haven not only for young people but for seniors and the entire community," District 2 Alderwoman Mary Osborne said during the ceremony.

It's the latest addition to the Benjamin Van Clark neighborhood, which

has seen significant public and private investment in recent years.

A partnership between the City of Savannah and the Housing Authority of Savannah led to the rebuilding of the former Garden Homes public housing community into an attractive mixed-income development that blends public, assisted and market-rate housing with home-ownership opportunities.

Ashley Midtown Townhomes includes 209 on-site units spread over a 29-acre tree-lined property complete with public parks. Ashley Midtown Senior Housing includes 100 units of elderly housing on an adjacent 5-acre site.

Complementing the work are 60 new in-fill houses, and more than 100 housing rehabilitations dotted throughout the surrounding Benjamin Van Clark neighborhood – the work of innovative public-private partnerships that are sparking significant investment in the area.

On Savannah's westside a similar revitalization is occurring.

City Council recently adopted the West Savannah Revitalization Plan, which includes major remakes of the

Please see **CENTERS**, page 2



Recycling Complex Education & Drop-Off Center

Where: 14 Interchange Court

Directions

From Interstate 516 (Lynes Parkway): Take Gwinnett Street west, turn right onto Interchange Drive, turn left onto Interchange Court.

From downtown: Take Gwinnett Street west, turn left onto Interchange Drive, turn left onto Interchange Court.

"Waste reduction is important for all of us, and the City takes great pride in its comprehensive waste disposal operations."

— City Sanitation Bureau Chief Stephanie Cutter

City makes recycling commitment with newly opened Education & Drop-Off Center

Got cans?

How about used plastic milk jugs, old steel drums or that refrigerator that died last year?

The City of Savannah is ready to take them all with the opening of its new Recycling Complex last month.

The facility off West Gwinnett Street — the first of its kind in Savannah — is part recycling center, part education facility.

Inside the education center the City's new recycling coordinator will be able to take residents through various displays and written materials about the science of waste and recycling, as well as explain City Sanitation programs, such as its drop-off centers, the landfill, waste to energy, and refuse collection.

"The center will provide a wealth of information on the value of recycling, and how it benefits the community and the environment itself," City Sanitation Bureau Chief Stephanie Cutter said.

The Recycling Complex accepts a variety of aluminum, steel, metal, and plastic goods. It is free and open to both City and non-City residents.

The facility, along with 14 smaller drop-off recycling sites throughout the City, complement the City's Resource Recovery Facility, which converts waste into energy while reducing trash volume bound for the landfill by 90 percent.

Recycling conserves natural resources, reduces waste volume and promotes a greater awareness of the environment.

Other recycling drop-off sites

Site	Address	Items Accepted
Bartlett Middle School	207 Montgomery Crossroad	Aluminum, Metal
East Broad Elementary School	400 East Broad St.	Metal
Garrison Elementary School	649 W. Jones St.	Glass (Green, Brown, Clear)
Bartow Elementary School	1804 Strafford St.	Aluminum, Metal
DeRenne Middle School	10009 Clinch St.	Aluminum, Metal
Barnes Restaurant	5320 Waters Ave.	Metal
Armstrong Atlantic State University	1935 Abercorn St.	Aluminum, Glass
Congregation Agudath Achim	9 Lee Boulevard	Plastics, Metals, Aluminum
Bacon Park Transfer Station	6400 Skidaway Road	Metal, Glass
Dean Forest Landfill	1327 Dean Forest Road	Metal, Glass

As the City moves forward with the drop-off center, it continues to explore the feasibility of and seek grant funding for a larger curbside recycling program.

In coming weeks the City will seek

proposals from private companies to construct and staff a recyclable materials processing facility, which would sort recyclables collected door-to-door by City Sanitation employees.

"I think the City is stepping forward

and showing through the allocation of money its commitment to the value of recycling," Cutter said. "Waste reduction is important for all of us, and the City takes great pride in its comprehensive waste disposal operations."

Recyclables

Recyclables are accepted at the Recycling Complex in five categories — aluminum, steel, plastic (commingled No. 1 and No. 2), scrap metals, and white goods. Here are a few examples of acceptable items:

ALUMINUM
Soda cans, beer cans.

STEEL
Cans and containers. Empty aerosol cans with tops removed. Various steel products such as pipes, drums, etc.

PLASTICS
Bottles and jugs marked either No. 1 such as soda, water, cooking oil bottles, or No. 2 such as detergent bottles or milk jugs with tops removed. **No plastic bags.**

SCRAP METALS
Lawn mowers. Bicycle parts. Swing sets. Tin cans. Various metal and alloy products (all plastic parts removed).

WHITE GOODS
Various appliances such as washers, dryers, refrigerators, stoves, etc.

Is your vehicle derelict? It's derelict if it meets one of the following criteria:
• Incapable of proper movement under its own power • One or more major parts for safe operation removed • No current tag • No current insurance



This car parked along New Mexico Street was cited as a derelict vehicle because it lacks a current tag. If the owner does not address the problem within 10 days, it will be towed, as is indicated on the violation sticker. Inoperable autos can also be cited as “derelict.”

Derelict vehicles targeted

City steps up effort to remove eyesores from neighborhoods.

Savannah Property Maintenance Inspector Gloria Butler spotted the offending yellow Monte Carlo parked along New Mexico Street. It wasn't the rust streaking the car's sides and trunk that grabbed her attention. It was the empty license plate holder.

In Savannah, all automobiles must have current tags, whether the car is parked or moving, and whether it is on private or public property.

The Monte Carlo had no tag.

So Butler pulled out a bright violation sticker, filled out the blanks, and secured it firmly to the rear window. In 10 days the car would either become legal or be towed.

"It can look dirty and dented, but we can't do much about it unless it has one of the big three," Butler said.

Those "big three":

1. Incapable of movement under its own power
2. No current tag
3. No current insurance

If your car falls under any of those categories, it is derelict. If so, you can

Derelict vehicles cited				
2003	2004	2005	2006	
1,748	2,146	3,492	4,560	

expect to see Butler and the rest of the Property Maintenance inspectors paying your car a visit very soon.

Last year they removed 4,560 derelict vehicles from the streets by towing them or forcing owners to either remove their cars or make them operable or licensed.

That's double the number of derelict vehicles removed just two years ago. The increased enforcement is part of Savannah's war on blight, one of City Council's top priorities.

"None of our residents should have to live next to these abandoned vehicles," City Manager Michael Brown said. "They are a source of visual pollution to our neighborhoods, and our goal is to remove all of them."

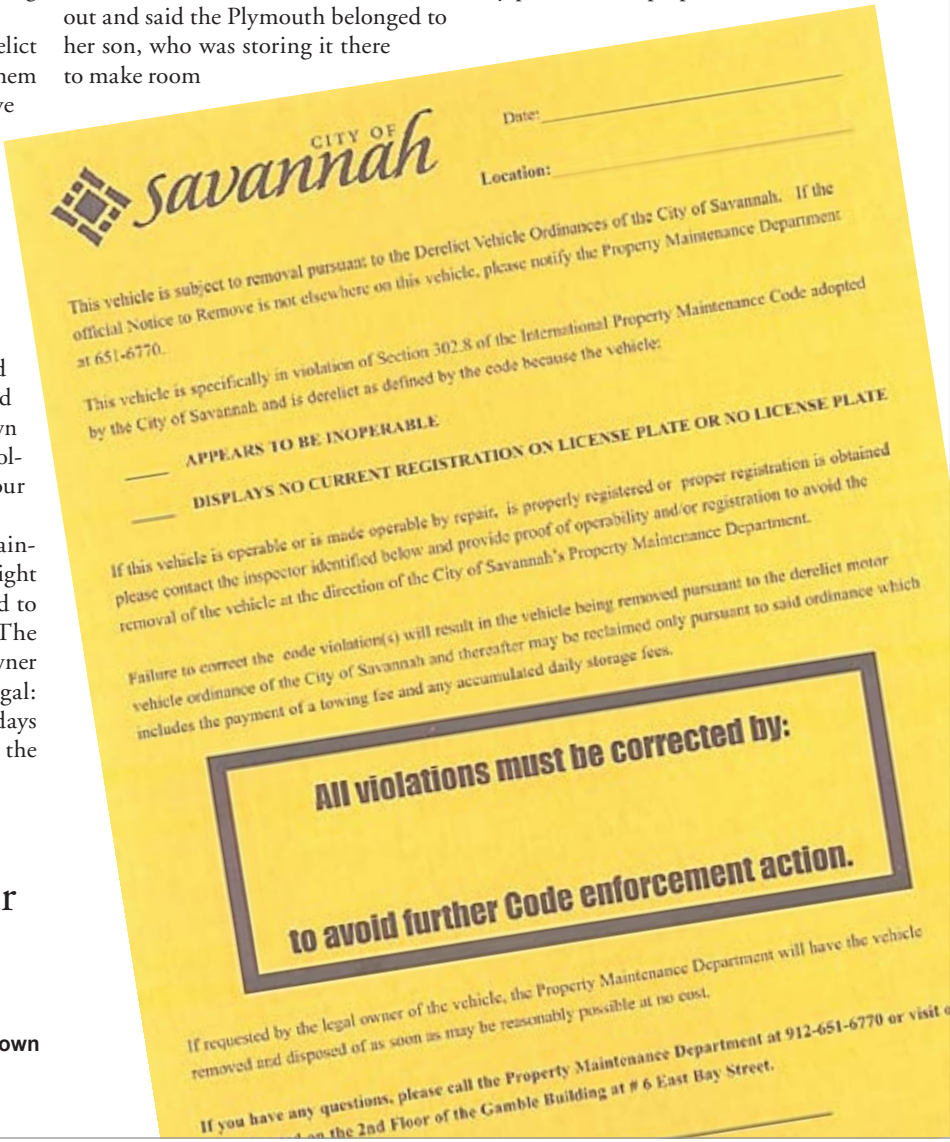
As part of that war, Property Maintenance this spring unveiled the bright violation stickers, like the one fixed to the Monte Carlo's rear window. The stickers clearly state how long the owner has to either remove it or make it legal: 10 days if parked on the street; 30 days if parked on private property. If not, the cars are towed.

Butler spotted the broken down Plymouth Gran Fury on private property off East 36th Street. A few of its tires were flat, knee-high grass ringed the rusted hulk, and its tag was expired: all derelict vehicle indicators.

Butler wrote a ticket. The owner ran out and said the Plymouth belonged to her son, who was storing it there to make room

for vehicles at his own house. She said she would make her son move it.

"Back in the day everyone had one car, and it wasn't a problem," Butler said. "Now it seem like everyone has three or four cars. That's too many for any person to keep up."



“They are a source of visual pollution to our neighborhoods, and our goal is to remove all of them.”

— City Manager Michael Brown



**Moses Jackson/
Lady Bamford centers**
Where: 1410 Richards St.
Hours: Monday through Friday,
8 a.m.-6 p.m.



W.W. Law Center
Where: 909 E Bolton St.
Summer hours: Monday
through Friday, 7:45 a.m.-8 p.m.;
Saturday, Noon-4 p.m.

Centers

From the cover

Augusta Avenue, Comer Street and Cumming Street Extension corridors as well as rezoning to reduce conflicts between residential and commercial land uses.

Key to this plan is the creation of the Sustainable Fellwood development on the 27-acre site off West Bay Street that once housed Fellwood Homes.

The public-private partnership between the Housing Authority and developer Melaver Inc. will add 220 affordable housing units, 75 senior housing units, a dozen first-time homeowner units, market-rate townhomes, 40,000 square feet of retail, medical and technical space as well as significant public green space.

Next door to the development, the City is wrapping up a \$1.7 million, 7,200-square-foot renovation to the unused east wing of the Moses Jackson Community Center. When opened early next month, the facility will provide innovative early childhood education for up to 58 children between the ages of 1 and 4.

It will be called the Lady Bamford Center for Early Childhood Development, named for the wife of JCB Chairman Sir Anthony Bamford, who is contributing money for the operation of the center. The program will be run by Wesley Community Center's Early Childhood Education and Development Program.

The renovation of the east wing of Moses Jackson comes eight years after the City renovated the west wing to house a Golden Age Center for seniors, meeting and event space for the neighborhood, and a computer resource center that's open to the community.

"We must personify this vision of serving citizens from early childhood to the senior years," Mayor Otis Johnson said. "This accomplishes that goal."

City plows through 100-Worst Properties List



The Property Maintenance Department demolished 83 dilapidated homes in 2006, including this one-story structure at 1146½ Hearn St.

Report a property To report a blighted property, dial 3-1-1 on your telephone.

Blight enforcement

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Blighted properties cited	4,626	5,054	5,697	3,655
Overgrown lots cut	2,933	1,986	3,183	2,602
Vacant homes demolished	265	163	79	83

In November 2006, the City of Savannah launched a new weapon as part of its war on blight: the 100 Worst Properties List.

The list focused on the worst of the worst substandard structures, unsafe buildings, prohibited businesses and problem vacant lots. The owners of these properties were frequently difficult to locate, making compliance tricky. Legal action was often necessary.

The Property Maintenance Department's goal was to have all properties on the list brought into compliance by December 2007.

City workers are half a year ahead of schedule. In the next month, the last house on the 100 Worst List will have been demolished.

"This was a priority for this community, and we took that seriously,"

Property Maintenance Director Trent Chavis said. "Blighted properties breed other, more serious problems in our neighborhoods."

While more than a third of those houses on the list were brought into compliance through demolition, Chavis noted that the goal is to save contributing structures if possible. He pointed to Savannah's Historic District, which once felt tremendous pressure to demolish dilapidated houses.

"And what would Savannah be like if they hadn't rehabilitated these homes?" Chavis said. About 15 of the properties on the 100 Worst List were brought into compliance through rehabilitation.

Don't let your property appear on the next 100 Worst List, to be unveiled in coming weeks.

About the renovations

W.W. Law Center
Renovation size: 4,218 square feet
Cost: \$1.5 million
Features: Exterior and interior makeover, new library, added meeting space, computer center, crafts room, improved handicapped accessibility
Named for: The late Savannah Civil Rights leader and historian W.W. Law

Lady Bamford Center for Early Childhood Development
Renovation size: 7,178 square feet
Cost: \$1.7 million
Features: Exterior and interior makeover, new roof, new heating and air system, asbestos removal, classroom space, bathrooms
Named for: Lady Carole Bamford, head of the philanthropic trust of local heavy equipment manufacturer JCB Inc. While the City is paying for renovations, the trust will fund significant operation and start-up costs.

What do you want for downtown Savannah?

You want it to be safe, of course. You want Savannah to remain economically vibrant while preserving the qualities that make it one of the world's unique cities.

But what's the best way to balance development and preservation downtown? How do we most effectively move people through a city filled with fragile historic structures arranged on a town plan created before the invention of automobiles? How do we encourage affordable housing amid escalating property values? ▶▶

Plan to be blueprint for downtown's future

Hundreds of residents participate in creating a vision for Savannah's center.



The Downtown Master Plan process has explored setting standards for outdoor uses, such as requiring ground-floor retail in targeted corridors, as shown left in a concept rendering of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The rendering also depicts conceived streetscape improvements, and the addition of streetcars to improve downtown mobility.

▶▶ These are some of the tricky issues that the Downtown Master Plan process is addressing.

Initiated 18 months ago by the Savannah Development and Renewal Authority (SDRA), the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and the City of Savannah, the process has engaged hundreds of residents, business leaders and representatives from civic and neighborhood groups.

"There are so many pressures facing downtown Savannah right now, largely as a result of exponential growth in the areas of development and residential investment," said SDRA Executive Director Lise Sundrila. "Our goal is to ensure downtown's economy is balanced, that it maintains uses that are diverse, that affordable housing options are available and that downtown is preserved as the hub of this region."

"We recognized that Savannah needed a blueprint for the future."

A consulting team conducted a detailed market and transportation analysis to help inform the effort, and worked in concert with staff from the City of Savannah and MPC to identify and address critical issues impacting the downtown area and the areas immediately adjacent. Six public meetings and dozens of neighborhood and civic meetings have been held to gather input in the areas of economics, education, social services, housing, mobility and accessibility.

On May 23, more than 300 residents, business, and property owners attended a presentation of the findings and preliminary strategies for the Master Plan. This public meeting was followed by three open house sessions which attracted more than 100 participants. These events allowed attendees to meet one-on-one with the consulting team and respond to



Residents participate in one of the dozens of Master Plan meetings held in neighborhoods throughout Downtown Savannah.

the preliminary strategies.

One area of the process that has required focused attention is the discussion of large-scale development. Increased pressure of large-scale development in the core of the Historic District is creating challenges in scale and diversity. In response, City, SDRA, and MPC staff along with the consulting team are evaluating current standards as they relate to managing large-scale infill and promoting quality, affordability and a balance of uses.

Over the next couple of months, additional community outreach and focus sessions will be held to ensure maximum input into the process. To provide expanded opportunity for input, the preliminary strategies are posted on the City of Savannah Web site for public review and response. This interactive site also provides access to the Master Plan presentation of findings and will be up through July.



Development bonuses have been recommended for the Master Plan that encourage desired uses, such as public open space, underground parking, green roofs and corner ground-floor retail, as shown in the above rendering.

What's next

In early fall, the consulting team will take input it has received from the public and begin to shape the strategies that will ultimately be included in the final draft Downtown Master Plan. Savannah City Council will have final say on the document.

On the Web

Learn more about the Downtown Master Plan, and have your say on what the recommendations should be, by taking an online survey at www.savannahga.gov.

Downtown Master Plan vision

The hub of economic vibrancy for the region, Greater Downtown Savannah maintains its historic and culturally diverse identity while preserving the Oglethorpe Plan, embracing future growth and providing an unparalleled quality of life.

Guiding principles

- Diversify economic opportunity
- Create vibrant neighborhoods with appealing and affordable housing
- Ensure a strong quality of life
- Maximize mobility options
- Retain fundamental elements of the Oglethorpe Plan

City job applications move online

Mike Rose isn't a computer whiz.

He's worked construction his whole life, "not exactly what you would call computer savvy," Rose said.

But last month Rose found himself on the City of Savannah Web site while checking out an open building inspections job. Savannah, he found, had moved to an online job application process.

So he took a deep breath and filled out the electronic application.

"It was really easy and self-explanatory," Rose said. "My wife didn't have to bail me out or anything."

In April, the City implemented a new application process that allows anyone to apply

for Savannah jobs 24 hours a day from the comfort of their own home, or at computers located in community centers and libraries across the city. Terminals are also available, with staff ready to assist, at the Human Resources Department on Broughton Street for those who still wish to apply in person.

"Before, the process required them to come to us," Human Resources Director Beth Robinson said. "This allows us to be available at all times and reach individual applicants in ways we could not reach them in the past. It is definitely customer-focused."

Job applications submitted to the City have increased almost 50 percent since the system went online; officials expect to receive more

than 10,000 this year.

With all of those applications now completely electronic, average processing time has speeded up an estimated 30-60 percent, and paper usage has plummeted, saving an anticipated 125,000 sheets per year. Applicants also benefit from increased updates e-mailed to them as their applications move through the hiring process.

"Everything is automated," Robinson said. "There is no slowing down to wait on the mail or staff time."

Rose got the job. He started as a City building inspector this month.

"It all worked out pretty well," he said. "If I can do it, anyone can."

By the numbers

- 175** Applications submitted weekly under new online process
- 120** Average submitted weekly under old application process
- 88** Percent of applicants from Savannah area

How to apply

To apply for a job, go to www.savannahga.gov and click on "City Employment," or visit the Human Resources Department, located in the Broughton Municipal Building at Broughton and Abercorn streets.





Falada Coston sits on the front step of the home she bought through the City's Dream Maker Program, which provides down payment and other assistance for qualified first-time homebuyers. Savannah has helped almost 500 people buy homes through the program.

Program makes home ownership dreams come true

Falada Coston kept waiting for the bad news. But three months into the City of Savannah's Dream Maker Program, everything was going so right. A homebuyer course, through the St. Pius X Family Resource Center, had helped her build credit and accumulate savings. The bank official had swiftly approved her loan. The City had come forward with downpayment money. And the Neighborhood Improvement Association workers steadily hammered in the framing, installed walls and floors, laid down the roof, and steadily pieced together her new home on Savannah's eastside.

"I kept waiting for something to be pulled from beneath my feet while I was going through the program," said Coston, 30. "I remember when they gave me the keys, and I said, 'That's it? I don't have to do anything else?'"

"He said to me, 'You're a homeowner now.'"

"I felt so blessed I can't even describe it. Do you have any idea how overwhelming it is to walk through your own home for the first time in your life?"

It's a feeling that's been shared by almost 500 Savannahians who, like Coston, have become first-time homebuyers through the City of Savannah's Dream Maker Program. Started in 2000, the program coordinates homebuyer education and counseling, and offers assistance with down payments, closing costs and gap financing for qualified residents.

Participants who make it through buy homes from partnering nonprofit housing developers like the Neigh-



Coston helped pick out many of the design features of her new home.

hood Improvement Association, New Legacy CDC, Coastal Empire Habitat for Humanity, and the Community Housing Services Agency, Inc.

For Coston, a Savannah State University student at the time, the program allowed her to move from her parents' apartment into a three-bedroom, two-bath home with a big back yard, an airy front porch, and a "huge walk-in closet." The bungalow is painted sky blue.

Dream Maker allowed Coston to become the first member of her family to own a home. Her mother was so impressed, she enrolled in Dream Maker this spring.

"It's never too late to buy your first home," Coston said. "The value to me is coming home, and it's my house. I can make it look however I want it to look, paint the walls whatever color I want to paint them."

"I can do that because it's mine."

For more information

Where: The City of Savannah Department of Housing, 10 E. Bay St.
Contact: Carol Ellison at 651-6926, ext. 1927 or visit www.savannahga.gov and look under "City of Savannah Highlights"

Where: Community Housing Services Agency Inc. (CHSA)
Contact: Darrel Daise at 651-2169

Who qualifies?

City residents with a combined household gross income of less than 80 percent of the median income for this area, as established by HUD. The maximum gross income for a family of four, for example, could not exceed \$44,650. A single person's gross income could not exceed \$31,250. Acceptable credit and work histories will be required.

How much can I get?

Dream Maker funds can provide between \$1,000 and \$60,000 for down payment, closing costs and gap financing to qualified participants. Participants will be required to borrow as much as possible from their first mortgage lender before being approved for Dream Maker funds.

Do I have to pay it back?

Depending upon the Dream Maker program you participate in, all or a portion of Dream Maker funds may be forgiven if you own and occupy the house for 5 to 15 years.

Do I need any cash?

Yes. You generally need to invest between \$500 and \$1,000, depending upon program and lender requirements.

"Do you have any idea how overwhelming it is to walk through your own home for the first time in your life?"

— Falada Coston, new homeowner

High-tech wastewater plant uses no chemicals

You flush. Ever think about what happens next?

If you live in Savannah's fast-growing westside, chances are that in the next two months your flush will end up at a cutting-edge, chemical-free \$19 million plant now nearing completion off Ga. 21.

There your waste will be screened, churned, filtered in every conceivable way, devoured by armies of bacteria and protozoans, disinfected through an ultra-violet channel and sent cascading down man-made rapids into a nature-made river system.

By then, your waste will be almost drinkable. Environmental officials expect the high-quality discharge to actually revitalize the wetlands it will flow into, enhancing plant and animal life along this stretch of the Savannah River system.

"This project is kind of one of those big positives where you win all the way around," said Charles Birkenkamper, director of the City's Water Quality Control Department.

Construction began almost a year and a half ago on the Crossroads Water Quality Control Plant the City of Savannah's first brand new wastewater treatment plant in



Water Quality Control Director Charles Birkenkamper at one of the new aeration basins, where the "magic happens."

almost two decades. It will replace the aging facility at Travis Field and will service existing and future developments around the airport, in Godley Station North, at the Crossroads and Spa business parks, Southbridge, as well as the massive New Hampstead community planned for newly annexed Savannah land in southwestern Chatham County.

It's an area that is growing fast, though the exact rate of growth is difficult to predict.

To accommodate this uncertainty, the Crossroads plant was

designed in modular fashion: It will be able to handle 3 million gallons per day when it opens later this summer, but has room to easily double that capacity when needed.

If you're like most of Savannah, your flush will arrive at the Crossroads plant sometime between 6 and 9 a.m. or 5 and 8 p.m. — which, like traffic, is rush hour in the wastewater world.

To handle these spikes, the effluent is first sent to a flow equalization basin to even out flow into one of three giant aeration basins. Millions of oxygen-rich bubbles fizz the water



Large rotating disks, coated with a material that looks like shag carpet, filter water before ultra-violet disinfection.

here, fueling billions of bacteria and protozoans that feed on the nutrient-rich wastewater.

"This is where the magic happens," said Water and Sewer Senior Engineer Julie MacLean. "It's straight biology. We're doing what the river would naturally do, but in a much more concentrated area."

The broken-down waste is then pumped into a clarifying basin, where the heavy stuff settles into sludge, is compacted and hauled off to the landfill. The remaining liquid is filtered through a system of large

rotating disks coated with a material that looks like shag carpet.

The clear water that comes out is sent through a long trough lined with ultra-violet light bulbs, which destroy the remaining bacteria, before cascading through an oxygen-injecting aerator on its way to the river basin.

"This will be very high-quality discharge," Birkenkamper said. "Some of this technology has only been perfected in the last 10-15 years. It's clear, safe to the environment, and is done without using any chemicals in the process."

SAVANNAH City Council

The people serving your community.



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